



Proponent Testimony HB 679
November 18, 2020

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Hottinger, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Ohio Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 679. My name is Thomas E. Collins, MD, FACEP, FAEMS and I am President of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland and Northern Ohio (AMCNO).

The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO), founded in 1824, is the region's professional medical association, and the oldest professional association in Ohio. We are a non-profit 501(c)6 representing physicians and medical students from all of the contiguous counties in Northern Ohio.

The mission of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio is to support physicians in being strong advocates for all patients and promote the practice of the highest quality of medicine.

The AMCNO stands in strong support of HB 679. Telehealth is a critical part of the future of medicine, and can help solve access problems for our patients. As we've seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth visits can be a necessary way to deliver care to patients when normal delivery of care is either unavailable or unattainable for a patient. Telehealth visits during COVID-19 allowed physicians to continue managing patient care while protecting patient safety. We have also found that this convenient way of communicating with our patients results in both provider and patient satisfaction.

We applaud the work of the administration and the legislature in allowing for the expansions of telehealth during the pandemic and we support the efforts in this legislation to make those expansions permanent.

Telehealth also has the potential to bring costs down in the health care system. A 2018 study from Anthem determined that telemedicine visit episodes were less costly than care at other locations for the same diagnoses. They also found similar follow-up visit rates as compared to in-person visits, indicating a similar rate of problem resolution. The study included Anthem medical claims covering 4,635 telemedicine visits.

Expanding access to telehealth visits allows providers to work in rural areas where access issues persist, and where providers are limited. And due to COVID-19 and the ongoing opioid epidemic, we have seen demand for specialists such as psychiatry and mental health providers rise substantially.

Again, the AMCNO stands in support of this telehealth legislation, as it would increase access to care, reduce costs, and improve overall health outcomes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 679.